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ABSTRACT

Desegregation, particularly court ordered busing, has been viewed independently of the complex historic and economic factors in which these policies are rooted. By focusing on the educational aspects of a social or political change the importance of various other factors which operate outside the school but which influence school programs and policies are obscured. A study of an urban desegregated high school which focused on several historical and environmental features of the town in which the school was located suggests several areas in which the social context of desegregation is important. For example: (1) the unique characteristics of the community in which desegregation takes place, (2) the community views of a particular school, (3) the political climate before, during and after desegregation, and (4) the timing of the start of the busing program. The case of Pawnee West High School demonstrates how the social environment can be a key variable in the desegregation process. It is noted that in this high school, the belief that school desegregation has been accomplished masks the importance of other kinds of educational experiences. To the degree that desegregation is seen as an end in itself, it can be used to slow down important efforts at racial and bicultural growth. (Author/AM)

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The Social Context of Desegregation: Busing as Scapegoat

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> In large part, contemporary man's self-conscious view of himself as at least an outsider, if not a permanent stranger, rests upon an absorbed realization of social relativity and of the transformative power of history. The sociological imagination is the most fruitful form of this self-consciousness. By its use men whose mentalities have swept only a series of limited orbits often come to feel as if suddenly awakened in a house with which they had only supposed themselves to be familiar. Correctly or incorrectly, they often come to feel that they can now provide themselves with adequate summations, cohesive assessments, comprehensive orientations. Older decisions that once appeared sound now seem to them products of a mind unaccountably dense. Their capacity for astonishment is made lively again. They acquire a new way of thinking, they experience a transvaluation of values: in a world, by their reflection and by their sensibility, they realize the cultural meaning of the social sciences.
>
> C. Wright Mills, The Sociological Imagination

Desegregation, particularly court-ordered busing, has been viewed independently of the complex historical and economic factors in which these policies are rooted. Originally busing was proposed as a means of achieving equal educational opportunity for students of all races. However, urban decay and violence came to be associated with busing, so that in the minds of many citizens, it began to be understood as a cause of problems rather than as a possible solution or positive strategy to bring about change. To some degree edu-

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cational researchers must bear responsibility for perpetuating a narrow view of desegregation and busing because so much desegregation research has focused only upon schools and academic achievement. Such a narrow view has reinforced the view that desegregation by busing is primarily an educational program designed to improve the quality of education. The fact that education has not clearly improved has occassioned serious questioning about the busing of school children to achieve desegregation as a policy.

A second reason for the narrow focus of many desegregation evaluation studies is the static concept of environment used in most educational research. (Michelson:1976; Cohen:1976). The "community" or the "social environment" is conceived of as a stage or an arena for school drama--the setting in which school events take place. Rarely is the school looked upon the setting for community drama: school is <u>in</u> the community but the community is <u>not in</u> the school. More seriously, researchers have not attempted to relate the complex and dynamic factors that operate upon both the school and the urban environment and which affect desegregation processes. The neglect of these important dynamics is particularly puzzling since the impetus for desegregation, the basis of support, and the interpretations of effect, have almost always come from outside of the local school. We suggest that some of the sterility reflected in desegregation research has its origins in this neglect of the social context. According to David Cohen this is the central conceptual difficulty of educational research: ". . . while the new programs seek to bring about political and social change, evaluators generally approach them as though they were standard efforts to produce educational change" (Cohen 1972:141). Focusing on the educational aspects (e.g., busing) of a social or political change (e.g., desegregation) obscures the importance of various other factors which operate outside the school but influence school programs and policies. Although we recognize the complexity of the phenomena and the difficulty of such a comprehensive approach, we believe it is essential to widen the scope of the discussion concerning school desegregation and busing.

Any study which deals with black-white relations in public schools must come to grips with the issue of desegregation. However, any attempt to do just that confronts the scholar with a bewildering complexity. As one author noted:

> . . . the national discourse on school integration exists on many levels and with many sets of untested and unexplicated assumptions. School integration has multiple realities. . . . No single value system or perspective can be so catholic as to encompass all the divergencies inherent in the phenomenon. (Rist, 1976:417)

Not only does desegregation have "multiple realities" nationally but even the relatively small community we studied displayed a wide-range of opinion on the subject. Part of this report will document those "divergencies."

The moral quality of the topic merely complicates matters for the social scientist. For many there is no doubt where morality lies:

> Equality, then, is the critical issue. It is the moral issue which all critics of desegregation must face. The increase in opposition to desegregation among social scientists and politicians reflects a decline of morality in society. (Poussaint and Lewis, 1976:328)

However, our experience with students, parents and educators of both races tells us that in actual practice the distinctions are not quite as hard and fast and the separation of "moral" from "educational" issues is problematic for participants and practitioners. These issues, entangled from the beginning of the school desegregation era, have become ever more entwined.

> The fact that the desegregation decision [Brown] was intended to foster education seems to have been forgotten. The focus has shifted, instead to balanced racial ratios in public schools. (Willie, 1976:313)

Those of us who are engaged in the study of race relations and related phenomena in public education confront the limits of educational technology whenever we approach the problem of "equality of educational opportunity."

> The basic problem is that we are ignorant as yet of what the necessary ingredients of educational practice or methodology must be to insure equal education. The classroom mix seems to be the most important factor of all, and teacher expectations seem to be as vital as teacher qualifications. (Carter, 1969:83)

During our two year study of an urban desegregated high school, we examined several historical and environmental features of the town where the school was located. We found that patterns of urban development firmly established prior to the busing controversy had "set" the destiny of the city several years earlier. We were also struck with the many ways historical perceptions of the school continued to influence the interpretation of desegregation seven years after the court order. However, we were surprised to learn that most people did not understand or connect the urban changes taking place in Pawnee[1] with the processes of desegregation except in so far as low socioeconomic status is accepted as limiting educational potential. By focusing upon desegregation as a separate issue, even those who supported desegregation policies and actively worked for their implementation appeared unaware of how significant environmental factors influence events.

Our data suggested several areas in which the social context of desegregation is important: those unique characteristics of the community in which desegregation takes place; the community views of a particular school; the political climate before, during and after desegregation; and the timing of start of the busing program. In this paper we would like to illustrate some of these factors in the case of Pawnee West High School to demonstrate how the social environment is a key "variable" in the desegregation process.

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[1]Pawnee is a pseudonym for a city in the North Central U. S. and Pawnee West is a pseudonym for the desegregated high school studied for two years with the support of the N.I.E. and discusses in an ethnography to be published in the near future.

Pawnee

Pawnee is a medium-sized city (population 85,000) located on the northern fringe of a major industrial city. The most important characteristic of a large proportion of its residents is their relative poverty. The poverty of Pawnee residents often comes as a surprise to those not familiar with Pawnee. The city government is wealthy, drawing upon a large industrial tax base that provides 60 percent of the city's funding and many of the towns surrounding Pawnee are wealthy suburban communities. Moreover, since Pawnee factories provide high paying jobs for families within a thirty mile radius of the city, a superficial view of Pawnee as a busy, working factory center often hides the reality that Pawnee residents do not get the well-paying jobs or, for that matter, the "good" city jobs and teacher salaries. It is estimated that about one-third of all Pawnee families receive some form of assistance, either in the form of social security, welfare, or disability payments. "Official" unemployment in Pawnee is almost always among the highest in the State, ranging between 14 percent to 24 percent, qualifying the Pawnee school district for almost every major federal supplemental education program on the basis of need. Real unemployment is substantially higher than these official estimates.

A second "characteristic" of Pawnee is that the industrial base is restricted to one particular form of manufacturing and the long-term prognosis for growth in this segment of the economy is not good. Although the industry may remain stable for several years ahead, there will be fewer jobs or expan-

sion programs to absorb the young of the city.[1] As the national economy becomes more service oriented, Pawnee will compete with other well-established areas that already have large shopping areas.

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[1]Census data indicate the dependence of the area on manufacturing. Fully four out of every ten people in Pawnee are employed in the manufacturing sector and the overwhelming majority are engaged in the production of "durable goods." Pawnee residents are even more dependent upon manufacturing than the remainder of the residents of the highly industrialized county where it is located. The following table displays the percentage distribution of occupations in Pawnee and the surrounding county.

Employment Characteristics
by Industry, 1970, Pawnee
(total employed, 16 years old and over)

	Pawnee	Percent of Total Emp.	County	Percent of Total Emp.
1. Construction	851	3.0	17,706	5.0
2. Manufacturing	12,110	43.0*	117,370	34.0*
durable goods*	11,524	41.0*	102,930	30.0*
3. Transportation	635	2.0	6,509	2.0
4. Communications utilities	569	2.0	8,323	2.0
5. Wholesale trade	524	2.0	16,918	5.0
6. Retail trade	4,192	15.0	57,168	17.0
7. Finance, insurance real estate	897	3.0	17,344	5.0
8. Business and repair services	632	2.0	12,057	4.0
9. Personal services	1,336	5.0	9,969	3.0
10. Health services	2,465	9.0	19,428	6.0
11. Educational services	1,694	6.0	29,120	8.0
12. Professional and related services	1,030	4.0	15,939	5.0
13. Public administration	963	3.0	10,658	3.0
14. Other industries	339	1.0	5,811	2.0
TOTAL EMPLOYMENT	28,237		344,320	

* Not included in total employment figure

SOURCE: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1970

new hospitals and service facilities. The poor of Pawnee are at a distinct disadvantage in the changing economic sector, and the viability of Pawnee as a center for attracting such jobs, is uncertain.[2]

[2]Comparative figures from the census indicate that Pawnee is gaining at much slower rates in service sectors than the surrounding county or the nation. For example, combining the non-manufacturing areas listed below, we find a growth of 35 percent in Pawnee as compared to 174 percent change in the county.

Employment Changes by Major Industry Division, Pawnee

	Pawnee			County			Nation		
	1954	1967	% Change	1954	1967	% Change	1954	1967	% Change
Manufacturing	32,634	37,000	13.4	57,624	94,100	63.3	15,651	19,339	23.6
Trade	5,713	6,145	7.6	24,102	41,551	72.4	7,124	10,116	41.9
Wholesale Trade	1,934	2,150	11.2	4,386	14,683	234.7	2,590	3,556	37.3
Selected Services	1,300	1,723	32.5	5,407	15,692	190.2	2,361	3,842	62.7
Government*	2,040	3,263	59.9	9,326	21,998	135.9	1,899	5,509	196.3
Total (of above)	43,621	50,281	17.9	100,845	188,024	86.4	29,535	42,362	43.3

*Interpolated from U.S. Bureau of the Census, Censuses of Governments for Michigan and the Nation (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957, 1962 and 1967 issues). Includes only local government and education employees.

Thirdly, Pawnee has a Southern, rural quality. Although this atmosphere seems to be slowly changing, it is still important in understanding Pawnee culture. The city is a small town in outlook and rhythm: leaders are locally atuned and influence is still expressed in personal ways. The Southern character is an important aspect of race relations.[1]

At the latest census, the black population is approximately 23,000 (from 3,000 in 1940 and 7,000 at the end of World War II); the Latino population is a mixture of Mexican Americans, Puerto Rican migrants and other Spanish speaking groups and is estimated to represent ten percent of the total population of the city. The percent of families below poverty level differ by ethnic group: in 1970 there were 19.3 percent of black families, 6.3 percent of Spanish speaking families and ten percent of white families.

Four Phases of Pawnee Growth

Conventional wisdom among many whites in Pawnee and the surrounding areas is that racial problems are at the root of Pawnee's difficulties. They point to the decline of Pawnee, particularly since 1950, and the simultaneous increase in the black population, concluding that this population contributed to the local deterioration. Because this view plays such a large part in making evaluations about school desegregation, it must be examined in some detail.

There were four distinct historical periods in Pawnee. The first began with its incorporation in 1832 as the county seat and commercial center for a rich agricultural region north of the large trading center that was to become a major industrial city. The abundance of oak trees led to a thriving

[1]In a recent school survey of parents 69 percent of whites and 83 percent of blacks were not born in Pawnee. Of these 19 percent of the whites and 54 percent of the blacks moved from the South and 53 percent of the whites came from other places in Michigan.

wagon-making trade, and with the westward migration of immigrants, Pawnee became a railroad center as well. By the turn of the century, Pawnee was a small, prosperous and well-established town.

The second major era of growth took place between 1910-1930 when Pawnee developed into an industrial center and became a prosperous "company" town. Even during the Depression, Pawnee's economy was better than most American cities and growth continued. By 1940, the overwhelming white population (only 3.8 percent were black), represented one-fourth of the county population and the city continued to be a regional center. The timing of this growth period is significant because it influenced Pawnee's destiny in several ways. For example, most public facilities in Pawnee were relatively new in the 1930's and early 1940's, the Depression and World War II cutbacks in building had little impact on Pawnee. After the war, there was not as urgent a need to modernize as in other industrial cities. Consequently, these facilities were older and more in need of repair in the 1960's and 1970's. In addition, Pawnee chose not to annex nearby land for future development at the height of its growth. This effectively limited Pawnee's potential for expansion, particularly after World War II when there was a demand for new housing units. Finally, Pawnee taxpayers had imposed a ceiling on tax revenues that severely constrained the city government from making capital improvements. As a result, Pawnee did not obtain sewer facilities, paved streets and other essentials in all areas until the late sixties. During the relative prosperity of the town from 1920 to 1950, such decisions did not appear overly restrictive, but they effectively prevent further development today.

Between 1940-1960, Pawnee experienced population shifts typical of many northern cities.[1] Southern families came North to find jobs in industrial plants; the black population increased from 4,500 to 14,000. By 1950 only 12 percent of the county population lived in Pawnee, and the number continued to decrease. The decision to accept federal funds for low cost housing was critical during this period.[2] The first such unit was completed in 1950. Since low cost housing was unavailable any place in the county, Pawnee became the center for poor families seeking shelter. Another set of decisions regarding the location of new interstate highways outside Pawnee, ended the city's dominance over gateways to the north, a major recreational area. The city had decided to build a circular road to relieve the traffic congestion caused by the north-south traffic but this circular road also provided a detour around downtown commercial establishments.

By 1960, the key decisions in Pawnee's development had been made, although the consequences of these decisions were not clear. In a newspaper story describing a city parade in 1961, the 150th anniversary of the town, Pawnee is described as the heart of the county, a strong commercial and industrial center, and a key transportation hub. Within ten years, downtown

[1]Population data indicate that after the decade of the Depression rates of growth among the black population of Pawnee are considerably higher than those for the white population. Another indication of the magnitude of the change is to note that in the years from 1900 to 1940, the percentage of Pawnee's population that was black increased from 1.5 to 4.2; this percentage increased to 26.6 in 1970 and is estimated at over 40 percent presently.

Percentage Change in Population in Pawnee by Race--1900 to 1970

	White	Black
1900 - 1910	49%	27%
1910 - 1920	122%	224%
1920 - 1930	89%	312%
1930 - 1940	3%	9%
1940 - 1950	11%	146%
1950 - 1960	12%	101%
1960 - 1970	4%	65%

[2]Historically, the political climate of Pawnee was conservative and both the town and the county participated reluctantly in Federal programs prior to 1960.

looked more like a deserted area than a center. Store after store closed because of competition from suburban malls. The traffic by-pass, the interstate expressway, the empty vacant lots that were to be the only accomplishment of urban renewal demolition, the dying railroads, and the poverty of Pawnee residents were strikingly different from the impressive expansion in surrounding suburban towns. In the forty years since the early expansion period, there were almost no new public buildings built and the quality of private housing had deteriorated as the poor moved into modest older homes[1]. Middle-income housing has not been built in Pawnee since 1920. To add to these difficulties, during the 1960's, Pawnee had one of the highest crime rates for a city its size, and government appeared to be paralyzed with inaction and pessimism.

It was not surprising then, that by the late 1960's when racial tensions erupted and the State Civil Rights Commission issued a report that became the basis of court action against segregated schools, many were prepared to believe that poverty, crime and the physical deterioration of Pawnee could be attributed to black in-migration. Desegregation, it was argued, would break the back of a dying city. It was easy to forget the critical economic and political decisions of three decades that had encouraged affluent citizens to seek housing outside the city; to ignore the effect of highways, urban renewal policies, and tax ceilings, as well as business shortsightedness that destroyed downtown commercial interests. By ignoring history, and the poverty which could

[1]According to a recent housing study there were 625 vacant repossessed houses in Pawnee in 1975. There has been a net decrease in single family housing units of 772 since 1970 and only 239 single family units have been built since 1970 compared to 1,011 demolitions. There were 837 vacant single family homes in 1975 out of an estimated total of 17,594.

be easily hidden in an affluent county, it was possible for many to "blame" desegregation.[1]

In fact, one could argue that after the busing order, and partly in response to the violence and national attention directed at Pawnee, the city received substantial numbers of federal dollars which helped to begin the rebuilding. Furthermore, the polarization of white and black populations encouraged new political awareness among black citizens that eventually would lead to a more equitable participation by black citizens in every sphere of Pawnee life.

Pawnee Today

Hindsight shows that the 1960's and 1970's marked a fourth developmental period in Pawnee's history: one of adaptation and transformation to changing social conditions. The local white commercial elite in charge of Pawnee's development resisted change. For example, a new electoral system known as the "Black Beater" changed the old ward system in 1962, effectively dispersing the emerging black political leadership in the city government. In a similar way, the School Board used a variety of strategies to prevent, delay and blunt desegregation efforts prior to the court order.

Desegregation took place during some of the lowest points in Pawnee's development. The bitter busing controversy was aggravated by the small-town atmosphere in which long-standing racial attitudes rose to the surface. But the publicity, the infusion of federal monies, and the political power of black leadership in spite of obstacles contributed to an important transfor-

[1]We were particularly interested in the movements of whites from Pawnee as one adaptation to desegregation. Not only had whites been moving from Pawnee steadily since 1950 because of better housing nearby, but the greatest expansion in suburban communities coincided not with desegregation, but with the interstate highway construction that made outlying areas more accessible. We were also surprised to note that in a stable white working-class neighborhood in the northern part of Pawnee, an examination of deeds showed housing foreclosures rather than sales were the major factor in moving. Pawnee is poor: when jobs are not available, people cannot maintain homes.

mation in local leadership. By 1970, black voters could not be ignored; federal regulations had to be enforced; and official policies had to be enacted, in spite of "old guard" reluctance to give up influence. Although many examples of political ineptitude on the part of newcomers could be noted throughout Pawnee, by the mid-1970's the signs of more effective political arrangements became clearer. One can now find black representatives in almost all divisions of the city government, although not usually in key policy-making positions. Last June, four black representatives were elected to the School Board constituting the majority. This Board will also select a new school superintendent in June. Federal funds have enabled departments to buy expertise in specific areas; a new city manager is influential in reshaping government policies; crime has been reduced substantially.[1] For the first time one finds expressions of optimism about urban renewal, and a growing confidence that Pawnee can be restored.

In summary, desegregation was introduced into a turbulent social environment in which major political, economic and social changes were taking place. Desegregation was both a result of those changes, and at the same time, a stimulant for more changes.

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[1]Since 1975 the violent crime rate has fallen 32 percent. More specifically; murder declined 50 percent, robbery declined by 10 percent, aggravated assault declined 12 percent, burglary down 26 percent, and motor vehicle theft 25 percent. Only rape and larceny increased, 10 percent and 2 percent respectively.

Pawnee West

> There is all this talk about equality of educational opportunity but all I can say is that I've got a bus to ride.
>
> Black student, 1976

In Pawnee West desegregation meant busing, since the school had black and white students in attendance since 1900.[1] Given the changing racial composition of the town itself, the school would have achieved racial balance close to the present one without busing.[2] It is ironic, however, that West was the location of considerable violence concerning court-ordered busing, and the negative image of this violent period tarnished the schools reputation. Most of those associated with the high school resented the bad publicity, which they thought unfair and distorted. Because of the publicity however and the actual violence that did take place, the staff at West are very concerned with student control. There is a constant emphasis upon keeping students in the building, avoiding confrontations, keeping outsiders away, and managing time so that students will have few opportunities to congregate. For example, the school day consists of five class hours between 8 a.m. and 1 p.m. without a lunch break or free time except a few minutes between classes. We found that staff energy was extensively given to the management of student careers to make sure that there would be little repetition of the "bad" days. In spite of these efforts, however, we found an undercurrent of violence that could not

[1]The first black student graduated from what would become Pawnee West High School in 1900. There was not another black graduate until 1918 and two or three graduated every year after that until the 1940's when the increase in the black population led to larger numbers of black graduates. The percentage of black students at Pawnee West for the two years immediately preceeding court-ordered busing were 47 percent and 42 percent, respectively. The redrawing of the boundary lines that was part of the busing order actually decreased the proportion of blacks at West to 34 percent.

[2]There is considerable evidence that most people overestimate the cost of busing. In a parent survey approximately 21 percent estimated that these costs were almost 30 percent of the district's budget, and 30 percent refused to estimate costs at all. The actual cost to the district is less than 15 percent of the total budget. It is difficult to separate desegregation and busing in Pawnee. District surveys show that few people oppose "desegregation" but the busing plan is considered a separate issue among whites.

be ignored and which made it impossible, in the eyes of many, to reduce student restrictions in any serious way.[1]

Desegregation is also interwoven, in popular thinking, with the new school building that housed West. The need for a new high school became clear by the mid-sixties, but the site controversy became a bitter racial dispute. Most whites wanted the building to be located on the northern fringes of the town: blacks preferred a central city location. The debate became part of the discussions about urban renewal, community control, and

[1]The violence consequent to the busing order is vividly remembered by administrators and teachers who were in the Pawnee Schools in 1971. An assistant principal at Pawnee West describes in detail his experiences of that violence.

> Well, things aren't as bad as they used to be. You know I've been beaten up plenty of times in terms of students. One time there was a fight in the West Commons and I waited in there and two kids are going at it and eight or ten other kids joined in and I'm getting beat up, hit and kicked and all that kind of stuff.

Another comment made by an administrator about the progress at West suggests some reduction in concern although our observations show it is still an important issue.

> I think that we're no where near what we were four years ago (when busing was instituted). We can do things today that were impossible then. For example, four years ago if somebody had suggested having a dance, it wouldn't have been seriously considered because of how we thought the climate was out there in the community. We are able to defuse incidents. Not as many incidents occur. Consequently, we can expand the activities that are available to kids that are in the school. We can give them a chance to do things that we would have been afraid to do back then. The administrators don't have to handle as much personally, as they did previously. Things have eased up. There aren't as many incidents that have to bolt with. There isn't a crisis kind of atmosphere. Look, you have to remember for the past ten years the chief mandate from the Superintendent and the Board of Education was not to let the kids hurt each other. We were responding to that, and that is important. The safety of the clientele was the primary concern of the school. Now, the climate has changed. Maybe safety is not as much of a problem.

only indirectly, with educational reform.[1] Ironically, the design of the building that had been pictured during the millage election was innovative based upon the idea of creating smaller schools within the larger unit. When a compromise over the site was was finally reached by building the new West on the same site as the old one, the small school concept was eliminated. Although some innovative design features were retained, the starkly modern building appeared to many to look more like a fortress than a traditional school. The concrete structure, with few windows, built on several different levels, also posed difficult problems of control. There were simply too many back stairs and secluded places where students could hide. The teachers found themselves isolated because of the design features and size of the new facility; the amount of informal communication between teachers decreased drastically. On the other hand, there is considerable community pride concerning the new school. It stands almost as a defense against the deterioriating neighborhoods to the east and south and as a buttress for the more stable and affluent areas to the west and north.

To many old-timers the new building symbolized a new West that was quite unlike the established school of the past. They complained about the prison-like atmosphere, the loss of friendly contacts within the building, the absence of good feelings among students and staff, and importantly, the decline in the quality of education. Although old-timers, predominantly white, seldom comment directly about desegregation, they do talk about busing problems in relation to the "violent" period (1968-1971). In this view the present is better than this unhappy time, but still not as "good" as the earlier period in

[1]The controversy was similar to another community debate over the location of a new hospital to replace the outmoded facility. Although this took place in 1976, five years after the school site debate, it centered upon issues of race, community control and planning. In 1976, however, a new concern over the quality of institutional services for the poor became a dominant theme. We discussed this in detail in a paper read at The Society for the Study of Social Problems, New York, 1976 "Local Institutions and Community Control", Jacqueline Scherer and Edward J. Slawski.

West's history.[1] The combined impact of the site controversy and the more favorable view of the old school was to aggravate racial attitudes.

[1]The comparison is usually stated in terms of academic excellence. The following conversation is typical of these kinds of remarks.

> Teacher 1: Old West was an "old heap" of a building but it had a very good reputation. You realize that when you get away from this place how good a reputation it has. Whenever you go to meetings, you hear people say what's happening in Pawnee. There is a new program, they have in Pawnee. Flexible schedules--they're doing that in Pawnee. Electives--they have that in Pawnee.
>
> Interviewer: Is that the way it used to be? Or is it still--
>
> Teacher 1: No. It's still true. We still have a good reputation for innovating, for doing new things.
>
> Teacher 2: Well, it certainly used to be true but I would agree with her (Teacher 1) about now. I don't think our reputation is as good as it once was.

On a scale of 1-10 parents of high school students in both West and the other school rated the schools as follows on a 1976 survey:

	Total	Whites	Blacks
Worst possible school (1)	4%	3%	6%
(2)	2	1	3
(3)	8	8	7
(4)	5	3	7
(5)	17	13	21
(6)	6	6	6
(7)	13	14	12
(8)	17	20	15
(9)	19	18	19
Best possible school (10)	9	14	3
Total percent	100%	100%	99%
Don't know (number)	(10)	(6)	(4)
Total number	(148)	(77)	(71)

There is no difference by race of parent.

As community attitudes toward West have fused together a variety of different experiences--a new building, racial violence, and a somewhat nostalgic view of the past--we suggest that almost unconsciously these ideas have been tied in a package along with busing. The unexamined combination of experiences overlooks the important debates that took place in Pawnee at the time of desegregation over urban renewal, political power and the governance of schools. Indeed, the educational intent of the building design was so soon forgotten that we had difficulty in finding the reasons for the modification. For example, a modern, well-equipped kitchen remains empty because the students do not have a lunch hour; crowding characterizes physical movement within the building but without the familiarity and personal component of the small-scale school concept; and, a hidden basis of comparison between the old and the new condemns the new almost implicitly. "Busing", from the student viewpoint, is the cause of many restrictions. Because of "busing" student activities were cancelled and many "unfair" rules instigated.[1] "Busing" is said to contribute to poor teacher morale and is at the root of many administrative problems. "Busing" became a convenient ecapegoat in a complex and confusing school context.

Desegregation

Studies of education during the early sixties revealed a national preoccupation with the goals of public schools. Sputnik was viewed as a challenge to American excellence; educators were accused of mindless activity (Silverman:1970) and of providing unsatisfactory socialization experiences (Freidenberg:1963, Henry;1970). There was an unquestioned assumption among

[1]In a student film photographed at West, the opening scenes showed students discussing desegregation. Some lines included the following: "We will never live it down." "They abolished a lot of things that brought kids together." The movie dramatized student frustration with restrictions. At the same time a school survey (1977) showed that one-fourth of the students continue to be afraid of certain places in the school. White females and younger students expressed more anxiety than older students.

most educators that a direct correlation existed between educational and economic success, but there was little consensus about curricular concerns. The rapidly growing educational enterprise did not have a center or clear focus upon which educational ideas could be anchored and rooted. It is not surprising, then, that within a decade American education moved from innovation to deschooling, from interest in rigid standards to open classrooms, and from concern over student passivity to concern over student disruption.

Thus, desegregation policies had to be implemented in an ambiguous and confusing educational context. Educators held no agreed-upon criteria about learning outcomes or desirable educational achievement levels, and much of the conventional wisdom in the field was severely challenged on many fronts. In this bewildering situation, the success or failure of a desegregation program could not be broadly based. Local attitudes, often contradictory and unrelated to the intent of the policy being implemented, became the basis of judgment. Generally local ideas of "good" education concentrated upon the maintenance of order, the survival of institutional routines, and the practice of traditional or "normal" school procedures.[1] In practical terms, this meant that desegregation was to be accomplished with the last amount of distrubance to the status quo; successful desegregation was one in which there was a minimum of disruption and conflict.

The fact that all educational institutions were in a state of uncertainty and that there was little consistent or fundamental agreement among those concerned with critical educational issues, posed another problem. To cover the vacuum and to keep diverse school publics together, consider-

[1]Cusick, in a study of a white high school, summarized this general view as follows:

> "What the school wanted was an orderly, well-run, clean school, one that was free of controversy, student unrest, or anything that could be called trouble." (Cusick,1973:39)

able rhetoric and symbolic appeals were utilized. In the past this has been done with the mythology of Americanization. The school as a national "melting pot" was an idea that flourished during a painful period of adjustment, when American schools tried to meet the needs of different urban populations with only limited success (Katz, 1971). Unfortunately ideological statements have the unintended effect of increasing expectations and inflating political demands. This led to wide-scale disappointment and frustration when the promises of education could not be carried out. Such frustration remains with us today.

We are also re-evaluating the goals of desegregation in relation to the educational rhetoric. The social context of desegregation in the U.S. has shifted dramatically during the past decade. The Supreme Court decision of 1954 promised the end of discrimination on the basis on the highest legal morality in the nation, but the busing orders of the late sixties were part of the Civil Rights activism and the governmental response to disorder in urban centers. These orders were seen as more than strategies to implement the court decision; they were viewed as ways of bringing about quality of educational opportunity, and implicitly, equality of economic opportunity. Many also believed that the goal of desegregation was cultural integration.

Today the discussions about desegregation are more concerned with educational outcomes rather than opportunities, and there is very little debate over integration. The shift in dialogue reflects a shift in viewpoints about the nature of race relations in the U.S. and the ways in which the black condition can be changed. For example, at West and in Pawnee, there is little attention paid officially to desegregation. For most people, the court order has been carried out: desegregation is legally accomplished

and working. On ceremonial occassions people point to the mixed student body with pride and there is a feeling of satisfaction that the school has come through an ordeal intact. This seemed so obvious to most people in Pawnee that we were frequently told our research was a waste of time and money.

But if people had little interest in talking about desegregation or discussing aspects of busing or court orders, we found that race relations constituted an important and controversial subject. Our observations illustrated the many ways in which being black or white influenced student behavior; and how race influences teacher perceptions, administrative policies and parental ideas. In a society in which race remains a master status it would be impossible for this not to occur. Schools do not exist outside of society, but in society, and the forces at work in the culture operate inside school walls as well. Most people in schools are not color blind any more than people are on the street, in offices or in homes.

Busing, or more accurately, school desegregation, is used in this instance as a scapegoat, not to absorb blame, but to direct attention away from racial issues. At West, for example, we were frequently told that students in a desegregated school learned to understand each other. We found this to be true in many cases, but we also found considerable evidence that it often did not happen. Furthermore, for some types of students, bi-racial contact was not a successful bi-cultural learning experience. Those students who enjoyed school, or who participated actively in school activities, were more likely to face bi-racial situations in which understanding could develop. But there were a large number of students who found the school experience boring, unpleasant and dehumanizing. They

used a variety of avoidance tactics to inhibit learni ng or to react only superficially with those who were different. A desegregated school can enhance the opportunities for bi-racial contact, but it provides many other kinds of challenges and problems for students as well. Most of these are basic to the student role and structured by the bureaucratic organization. Success or failure in a variety of settings usually leads to a sense of confidence or loss of confidence in the school environment that well enables a student to venture into bi-cultural learning experiences or inhibit this development. Frustration in school often has the effect of making students more cautious of bi-racial contact and bi-cultural learning.

We are concerned that desegregation and busing can become scapegoats to avoid the clearer understanding of race relations. It is easy enough to desegregate students if we mean putting blacks and whites in the same building or classroom. But to develop understanding, to learn about each other's culture, to share common experiences and to begin to trust one another requires much more though, energy, planning and commitment. To the degree that desegregation is seen as an end in itself, it can be used to slow down important efforts at racial and bi-cultural growth.

Summary

In Pawnee West, the belief that school desegregation has been accomplished may mask the importance of other kind of educational experiences. There are important lessons to be learned from desegregation research. The most important, however, may be to note what is left out of studies. We suggest that the neglect of the historical, cultural, economic and political factors in the wider social environment has contributed to the view of de-

segregation as a school problem. Controversies and conflicts originating in many other areas of community life then tend to become identified with busing and remain linked with desegregation long after the original issues have been resolved. Because the processes of desegregation have tended to be viewed as independent activities the unexamined expectations and fears remain at the core of public attitudes and determine the effectiveness of programs. We are reminded that social policies are time and place bound. If we, as researchers forget this, we do so at the risk of accuracy, comprehensiveness and utility in our work.

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